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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
PRIMARY VISITATION
OF THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
W I L L I A M, CLEAVER
LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER;

HELD AT
RICHMOND, IN YORKSHIRE,
AUGUST 21st, 1789.

PUBLISHED AT HIS LORDSHIP'S REQUEST.

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AND LATE
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BRITISH MUSEUM

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MATTHEW V. 16.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT
THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLO-
RIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

THE superior Excellency of that Dis-
course, from which these Words are
quoted, was deservedly acknowledg-
ed in the early Ages of the Church. It was
selected for the Instruction of young Persons
in the Principles of Christian Morality. The
great and salutary Precepts of practical Reli-
gion are here delivered in artless and una-
dorned Language. Our beneficent and hea-
venly Teacher did not amuse his Hearers with
verbal Disputes or scholastic Subtleties. The
trifling Disquisitions of pagan Philosophy have
no Place in this invaluable Compendium of
moral Truth.

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It has been remarked, that our divine Master, in his Addresses to the Multitude, frequently enforced his Instructions by alluding to what more immediately presented itself to his Observation*. This Remark may, perhaps not improperly, be applied to the Passage just read to you. To inspire his Hearers with a generous Desire of distinguishing themselves by an extraordinary Improvement in Goodness, it may be reasonably presumed, that he directed their Attention to an Object before them—to the SUN, the Lamp of Day, which was now pursuing his Course in the Expanse of Heaven, diffusing Light and Chearfulness around him. Ye are, like that Sun, *the Light of the World*: “How conspicuous, how bright should you appear under that Character!” In the Countries of the East, celebrated for mild Climates and unclouded

* See Maundrell's Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, P. 115; and Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel, Part i. Ch. 11.

Skies,

Skies, no Object could possibly be more gorgeous and magnificent than this great Luminary of Heaven. To this glorious Body, which the oriental Writers have graced with the various Appellations of "the Lord of the World," "the supreme Light," "the most Excellent,"—I say, to this glorious Body the Splendor of good Actions, and the Examples of virtuous Life, may be not unaptly compared. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

Example hath not feldom the Force of Authority and Command. So widely extensive is its Efficacy, that some Writers have been induced to consider it as the Source of our Morals. Man, prone to Imitation, is strongly inclined to form himself after those Patterns which are placed before him. Now our Condition would be truly miserable and forlorn, if good Example had not Powers peculiarly attractive and engaging: And though

we cannot but regret the Modesty and Timidity of many worthy Men, who wrap their Virtue in Obscurity, and are not ambitious to force themselves into the Notice of the World; yet it is pleasing to observe, that there are few Stations of Life in which the Usefulness of a good Example is not conspicuous. Even in the silent Scenes of Privacy and Retirement it is of great Avail. It does not, indeed, there dazzle you with the Pomp of worldly Parade and useless Ostentation: It is clothed in the simple, but decent Garb of Humility and Lowliness, like that Wisdom which derives its Descent from Heaven, mild and gentle, peaceable and forbearing.

The Importance of this Lesson of Instruction, which the Text inculcates, is sufficiently evinced, from the Effect it had on the primitive Professors of the Christian Faith. Of all the Arguments which contributed to the Success of the Gospel, none probably was more prevailing than the exemplary Piety, the uncommon

common Virtues of those first Followers of Christ. Their Conduct was scrutinized with curious and envious Eyes; they were exposed to Calumny, and loaded with Reproach: But their blameless Manners, their uncorrupt Lives, a Magnanimity superior to all Difficulties, a noble Contempt of Riches and Honors, an undisturbed Tranquillity in the Hour of Death, an invincible Patience under Tortures still more grievous than Death—the Assemblage of such brilliant and divine Qualities reflected Lustre upon their Faith; while those who saw and admired the Shining of their Light, as well in living as dying for the Gospel, joyfully embraced the Doctrine of the Cross.

On the other Hand, to the Ignorance, and consequently the Immorality, of the Greek Church, its Overthrow is entirely ascribed. And hence we cannot be surprized, when we read the Narratives of those terrible Calamities which were brought upon that Church,
first

first by the Saracens, and then by the Ottoman Race.

In the Annals of our own Nation, we find, that the chearful Innocence and sweet Simplicity of Manners which adorned the Characters of our earliest Reformers, equally commanded the Admiration of their own and each succeeding Age. Indeed the Complexion of those Times in which they flourished was in no Respect more discernible than in the Use of many vain and pompous Rites, the Introduction of pecuniary Compensations for Sin, which contributed to weaken the Principle of Virtue, and in a great Measure to destroy the Necessity of good Works. Hence the genuine Worth of a virtuous Conversation and an holy Life was exceedingly depreciated. —But a more pleasing Scene discovers itself to our View. The Volumes of Scripture, which had been long sealed up and hidden from the common People, were no sooner opened and explained to them, than the Mists
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of Error became dispelled, and the lovely Truths of the Gospel were sincerely acknowledged and admired. Those venerable Persons, whom the Protestant Religion claims as its great Champions and Defenders, shone as Lights in the World; whilst the first Reformer, a Native of this County*, called by one of our old Writers "ENGLAND'S MORNING STAR," rendered himself justly celebrated for the Extent of his Learning, the Energy of his Eloquence, and the unblemished Purity of his Life. Surely the Tribute of unfeigned Applause is ever due to the Memory of these exalted Characters. *They were acceptable to God, and approved of Men: Their Name liveth for evermore. The People will tell of their Wisdom, and the Congregation will shew forth their Praise.*

The Christian Religion has been represented by its Adversaries as tending to debase the

* JOHN WICLIFF, distinguished among his Contemporaries by the Title of "the Evangelical Doctor."

State of Man, by enjoining Humility and Self-denial, by detaching us from every worldly Pursuit, by deadening our Eagerness for Glory, and extinguishing those Sparks of Ambition which rouse the Mind to Activity and Vigor. And it must be allowed, that the Acquisition of Fame, or popular Applause, is never suggested in the Gospel of Christ as a Motive to animate us in the Discharge of our Duty. That Gospel disparages, and holds in little Estimation, those Objects on which the Pride of Man is apt to fix; such as Wealth, Honor, and secular Wisdom: The Contempt of which is the Criterion of a great Mind. But it proposes to us more powerful Incentives to real Merit. The Glow of Emulation, and the Ardors of virtuous Ambition, are fostered in our Breasts from the strongest of all Motives, the Desire of advancing the Glory of God. Such is the Doctrine of the Text. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works,*
and

and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. With this aptly corresponds the Admonition of St Peter to his new Converts. *Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evil Doers, they may, by your good Works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation*.* Thus are we encouraged to recommend ourselves by the unfulled Integrity of our moral Conduct: Not to conceal our Talents, not to place our Lamp under a Bushel; but to bring it forth, to display its Light. Is it not the most honorable of all Incitements, for a frail and dependent Being to exert itself with indefatigable Assiduity, to glorify its almighty Creator? If that great and wise Being has graciously condescended to notice, accept, and reward the Services of the Children of Men; nay, in some Measure even to derive Glory from them, shall we not eagerly endeavour to deserve his Favor? Let the pensive Inha-

* 1 Pet. xi. 12.

bitant of the cloistered Gloom seclude himself from the Eye of the World: The Influence of his Virtues is lost, like the Flower of the Wilderness, which wastes its Sweets unnoticed and unseen. A Life of Indolence and Supineness is truly dishonorable. The Duties of a Christian are represented in Terms expressive of unceasing Vigilance, of continued Efforts. To assume the Diligence of the Merchant, who labors with unwearied Toil to obtain the Pearl of great Price—to have our Loins always girt, like the anxious Traveller, who pursues his Journey with unremitting Attention and Care—to run the Race with the painful Solitude of a Candidate for the Pythian or Olympic Wreath—under such Imagery are happily shadowed out the Difficulties and Labors of our Christian Vocation.

The laudable Ambition of pleasing his Creator (and what more glorious Ambition can the Mind of Man have?) should impel every Individual to aspire after the highest Attainments

ments of Goodness. How elevated therefore, how improved should be the Character of that Order of Men which is more immediately set apart for the Service of God *! The Direction in the Text is applicable to all the Disciples of Christ; emphatically so to the Ministers of his Gospel, the appointed Dispensers of his Word. And surely this Injunction was never more seasonable than in the present Age—when the most important Truths of Revelation have been boldly contradicted, and the Inspiration of the sacred Writings only *not* denied; when those Writings have been rudely mangled by the Licentiousness of Criticism †, and the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST,

* Cum omnes omnino Disciplinam tenere oporteat, multo magis Præpositos & Diaconos curare hoc fas est, qui Exemplum & Documentum cæteris de Conversatione & Moribus suis præbeant.
—*Cypriani Epist. 62, Sect. 2.*

† Every Encomium is due to the judicious and temperate Criticisms of a Lowth and a Kennicott, a Blaney and a Newcome, on the Old, of an Owen and a Barrington on the New Testament. The rash and adventurous Hand which, against the Authority of
MSS.

CHRIST, the eternal Son of God, nearly reduced to a Level with the Koran of Mahomet. Some happy Effects, indeed, have originated from hence, as Evil is often productive of Good. Of the Lucubrations of those Persons who lift up the Hand of Parricide against that Church to whose Bounty they owe their Bread, it is sufficient to observe, that they soon sink into Obscurity. The incessant Exertions of the avowed Enemies of our Faith have incited pious and learned Men to examine the Grounds, and defend the Cause, of our common Christianity*. To

MSS. and with all the Temerity of Conjecture, dares to erase whole Chapters, merely to support the Hypothesis of the present Moment, is here censured.

* " It has pleased the divine Wisdom never yet to leave Christianity wholly at Leisure from Opposers; but to give its Professors that perpetual Exercise of their Industry and Zeal. And who can tell, if, without such Adversaries to rouse and quicken them, they might not, in a long Tract of Time, have grown remiss in the Duties, and ignorant in the Doctrines, of Religion.?" — *Dr Bentley's Sermon at a public Commencement at Cambridge.*

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the labored Apology of one Author, and the heterogeneous Compositions of another, we owe the vigorous and successful Efforts of true Genius and profound Erudition. Need I to add, that the Endeavours of a well-known Historian to fully the Purity of our holy Religion have given Birth to many truly valuable Publications, in which its transcendent Excellency is most powerfully asserted and most happily confirmed? And here one Rule obviously suggests itself to our Notice. The most accomplished Critic of Antiquity has recommended to those who are desirous of excelling in Composition, to enquire how the best and most correct Authors would have expressed themselves on the Subjects before them; and thus to catch the Spirit, and acquire the Powers, of these inestimable Writers*. Let the same Lesson be observed in

* Longin. de Sublim. Sect. 14.

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the Regulation of our Conduct *. Amidst the wild Extravagance of Opinions, and the open Profligacy of Manners, which almost every-where prevail, when we see the essential Doctrines of our Church attacked by the Wit, and ridiculed by the Sneer, of Profaneness—in these and similar Cases, let us reflect how ST PAUL or ST JOHN would have acquitted themselves; How the one would have discovered the most fervent Zeal in the Cause of his Religion; how the other would have breathed the genuine Spirit of Charity and Love. Or if the Examples of Men particularly favored with the Influx of divine Grace, be deemed too elevated for us, let the Pattern of the venerable HOOKER †, or the devout HERBERT,

* Epiſteti Enchiridion, C. 51. Aliquis Vir bonus nobis eligendus est ac ſemper ante Oculos habendus ut ſic tanquam illo ſpectante vivamus et tanquam illo vidente faciamus.—*Seneca Epiſt.*
11.

† May I be allowed to adduce the well-known Teſtimony formerly given to the literary Merit of this excellent Perſon? The learned Doctör Sanderſon having read to Pope Clement VIII.
Hooker's

HERBERT*, be ever before us. Animated by their holy Fervors, their truly apostolical Labors, let us endeavour to express, in our own Lives, a faithful Transcript of their Humility, their placid and sanctified Learning, their pious and primitive Deportment. In the History of their Lives, as in a polished Mirror, we behold the lovely Union of those excellent Qualities, which adorn the Temper, and exalt the Character, of a Christian Pastor. What, though Neglect, Obloquy, and Contempt, should be our Portion? Such, also,

Hooker's first Book of ecclesiastical Polity in Latin, his Holiness said, "There is no Learning that this Man hath not searched in-
"to: Nothing too hard for his Understanding. This Man, in-
"deed, deserves the Name of an Author: His Books will get
"Reverence by Age; for there are in them such Seeds of Eterni-
"ty, that, if the Rest be like this, they shall continue till the last
"Fire shall devour all Learning."

* It will not surely be deemed presumptuous to recommend the diligent Perusal of the little Tractate, entitled "A Priest to the Temple," published by Mr George Herbert. That Simplicity of Language, that Fervor of Piety, which pervades this Work, abundantly compensates some Singularities observable in it, which may be attributed to the Age in which it was written.

has been the Portion of the best of Men. Even our blessed Lord himself, the resplendent Exemplar of perfect Innocence, experienced the Bitterness of Wrath, the Harshness of Reproach, and the Virulence of Censure. Much less can we, his humble Followers, ever hope to escape the same injurious Treatment. But let not this prompt us to a Relaxation in our Endeavours to excel in Goodness: Let not our Light be rashly and hastily extinguished: Rather let it continue to spread its mild and benign Influence around.

The Church of England has long been happy, and, I trust, she will always continue so, under the Government of wise and good Men; while her parochial Clergy have generally merited the highest Applause by their Learning, their Piety, their Moderation. We may, however, affirm, without incurring the Imputation of Temerity or Invective, that such bright Examples have not conduced to
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lessen the Quantity of Vice and Profaneness in the Degree that might be reasonably expected. And it is painful to remark, that the Exertions of some few Individuals will scarce accomplish so desirable an Effect; that more energetic Means are still wanting to produce an extensive and permanent Reform. But shall this discourage us? Shall our Zeal be slackened, from a Notion that the Times cannot bear any vigorous Display of it? This would be to do the Work of God by the short-sighted Maxims of worldly Policy. Our Diligence and Affiduity should never be at a Stand. It becomes us, with the Ardor of Nehemiah and his faithful Builders, to be continually upon our Guard. While we dispense the Lessons of Instruction to the People, while we press upon them the Necessity of a good Life, it is our Part, by the Amiability of our own Behaviour, to illustrate the Power of Godliness, alienating ourselves as much as possible from the unedifying Conversation of

the World, from all its vain and frivolous Amusements,—by the severest and most rigid Temperance—by a contemplative, an humble, and an holy Life. The Apostle has expressed himself in this Chapter in a Manner peculiarly emphatical. *Inexcusable art thou, O Man, whosoever thou art, who teachest another, and teachest not thyself. Thou who knowest God's Will, and art a Guide to the Blind, a Light to those which are in Darkness, an Instructor, and a Teacher, through breaking the Law, dishonorest thou God*?*

To lead Mankind to immortal Happiness being the End of all our Doctrine, the Point to which all our Studies should converge, how can we better make *our Light shine before Men*, how can we better support the Dignity of the ministerial Function, than by a sedulous and critical Enquiry into the Learning of the inspired Writings? an Enquiry worthy

* Rom. xi.

of every Christian, Gentleman, and Scholar. Let it not be deemed a mere declamatory Topic, to intimate the Obligation we are under to search those heavenly Volumes with unremitting Diligence. Whether we examine the historical, the prophetic, or doctrinal Parts of Scripture, we shall experience them much more worthy of Regard than the most elaborate and refined Compositions of Greece or Rome. The Mysteries of our holy Religion are not vain Speculations to divert the Imagination; they are the awful Truths, the fundamental Doctrines, of *that glorious Gospel which is committed to our Trust*, and therefore deservedly claim our most serious Attention.

“ When Moses and Elias,” says the celebrated Mr Boyle, “ left their local, not real
 “ Heaven, and appeared in Glory to converse with our transfigured Saviour on the
 “ Mount, their Discourse was not of the Government of Kingdoms, the Engagement
 “ of great Armies, Conquests, and Revolutions
 “ tions

" tions of Empires—but they discoursed up-
 " on the chief Subject of the inspired Book,
 " the Decease which he should accomplish at
 " Jerusalem, those meritorious Passions, that
 " miraculous Death, that were to redeem and
 " save a whole World." Surely then, when
 we consider these Books as written by the
 Finger, and dictated by the Spirit, of God,
 as faithfully recording the blessed Life and
 Actions of that divine Master, under whose
 Banners we have the Honor to serve—with
 what Earnestness should we apply ourselves to
 the Acquirement of the Wisdom therein con-
 tained! Thus shall we be better enabled to
 comprehend the grand Design of Man's Re-
 demption: We shall be better prepared to
 contend with the Herd of shallow Deists,
 atheistical Freethinkers, and loose Lovers of
 this World: We shall be supplied with every
 sound and rational Argument to combat with
 Success the Bigotry of Enthusiasm, the Inso-
 lence of Profaneness, and the Impertinence of
 Folly;

Folly; to admonish with Patience, and to rebuke with Boldness; to strengthen the Weak, and to instruct the Doubtful. And thus we may be truly said *to make our Light shine before Men*. Yet let it ever be remembered, that all human Erudition should subserve the Cause of practical Religion—that the most extensive Knowledge and the most cultivated Understanding, all the Learning of the most learned Rabbies, Philosophers, and Divines, will be of very little Import, unless there be a Practice most strictly conformable to our holy Profession. The Life of a Christian is the best Comment upon his Doctrine; and the only true End of every literary Accomplishment is, to amend the Manners and improve the Heart, to make Men good Citizens and good Christians. And though it may not be the Lot of every Minister of Christ to receive the just Reward of his Labors here (for we see many Clergymen, nay even stipendiary Curates, consigned to an Oblivion, who have an

indisputable

indisputable Claim to higher Expectations); yet let such console themselves with this Reflexion, that intellectual and Christian Excellencies are the sole Foundation of genuine Merit; and that to promote the spiritual Good of others, and thereby to enlarge the Kingdom of Christ, will finally exalt us to that Place, where *they that be wise*, or, as it might be rendered with more Propriety, *they that are Instructors*, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars, for ever and ever*.

* Dan. xii. 3. Thus it is translated in the Margin of our Bible; and in Joye's "Exposition of Daniel the Prophete, 1545," *Also the Teachers shall shyne lyke the Brightnes of the firmamente: And they whiche brynge many to the Knowledge of the rightwyse making, shal shine perpetually lyke the Starres.*

F I N I S.

